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ABSTRACT

The research reported was an effort to determine whether, in the absence of validated models or measuring instruments effective for objective counseling of mature females, such often-relied upon, easily obtained, visible pieces of data as age, number of children, and educational background are critical predictor variables for counselors and counselees to consider in career decision making. Data were obtained from a followup survey of 110 women with home-oriented careers who had participated in a career counseling program; their decisions were categorized as: (1) no change, (2) return to school, or (3) return to paid employment. Ten personal/social factors often used predictively were examined for effectiveness as predictors of (1) vocational maturity and (2) women's career change. The factors studied did not effectively predict vocational maturity. Questions were raised regarding the viability of accepted concepts of vocational maturity as they apply to mature women and regarding the appropriateness of instruments available for measuring vocational maturity, specifically, the Adult Vocational Maturity Inventory. The personal/social factors were more effective in predicting career change of the women studied and yielded a limited model for classifying women into the three career-decision groups named above. Tables and survey instruments are appended. (Author/AJ)

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Predicting Career Change of Mature, Middle-class, Married Women[1]

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PREDICTING CAREER CHANGE OF MATURE, MIDDLE_CLASS,MARRIED WOMEN

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Abstract

The research sought a prediction model for counseling mature, middle-income, married women who contemplate change from predominantly home-oriented careers to those associated with education or employment markets. Three discrete career groups were identified from data obtained in a follow-up survey of 11[illegible] women who had participated in a career counseling program. The groups were defined in respect to the change decision as : 1) no-change; 2) educational-change; 3) employment-change. Research focused on the predictability of 1) vocational maturity and 2) career change of women; personal-social factors drawn from their life experiences were examined for effectiveness as predictors. The factors studied did not effectively predict vocational maturity, leading the study to raise questions regarding the viability of accepted concepts of vocational maturity as they apply to mature women; questions were also directed at the appropriateness of available instruments used to measure vocational maturity. The personal-social factors were more effective in predicting career change of the women studied and yielded a limited model for classifying women into the three discrete career groups.

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INTRODUCTION

Public and professional attention regarding career activities of women has virtually exploded in the past few years. One of the most dramatic trends noted is the massive movement of mature, middle-income married women from the home-oriented and community volunteer commitments to the pursuit of careers in education or the general labor market. The problems which women generally experience as they return to school or paid employment are magnified to a great extent in the particular re-entry group characterized as mature, middle-income, and married. These are women of the "transitional generation." They are typically women in their 30's, 40's, and 50's who interrupted their education to marry and raise a family. Their life patterns to this point had been consistent with cultural expectations for women. However, they are now faced with the conflicts stemming from the need to reconcile past experiences and socialization with newly emerging values, attitudes, and opportunities.

There is abundant evidence (Farmer, 1971; LeFevre, 1972; Nye and Hoffman, 1963; Sullerot, 1968; Sweet, 1973) that a range of complex problems do exist for these women as they contemplate changing their life styles. Further verification appears from career counseling programs which have proliferated across the country in response to the needs of women who are seeking help in clarifying personal priorities and goals.

Few women of the transitional generation are immune to the psychological and social problems generated by the growing public acceptance of women's new liberated status. However, for a special segment there is an added dimension to their dilemma. These are the women who are not driven by economic necessity to return to work; their choice process is often confused by conflicting social pressures and personal needs. On one

hand they are urged to "get out and do something," and on the other, to maintain a predominantly home-based role.

Since only about fifty percent of the married women on the labor market have cited economic need as their primary reason for working (U.S. Department of Labor, 1969) it seems obvious that other factors are important determinants in the career choice process of women. However, professional efforts to assist women with career decision making have been hampered by a lack of information related to vocational development and career behavior of women. The prominent theories of vocational development are clearly focused on the career development of adolescent and mature men (Ginzberg, 1951, 1972; Super, 1953; Roe, 1956; Tiedeman, 1961, 1963; Holland, 1966, 1973). These theories merely acknowledge the diverse career patterns of women, and therefore shed little insight toward understanding the forces which influence a woman's career decision making.

There is sparse research to support the use of existing models or measuring instruments which can be used effectively for objective career counseling of mature females. Osipow (1968), Owens (1970), and Vetter (1973) have comprehensively reported the inadequacies of existing instruments. Harvey and Whinfield (1973) specifically demonstrated little utility for counseling females with Holland's Vocational Preference Inventory. The original Strong Vocational Interest Blank was blatantly biased; Strong and Campbell (1974) have revised the instrument with a particular emphasis on reducing its masculine orientation, but the revision has not yet been comprehensively evaluated.

Because of this situation counselors often rely upon visible and easily obtainable data such as age, number of children, and educational background. The research reported here was an effort to determine whether

such visible pieces of data are critical variables for counselors and counselees to consider as they engage in career decision making processes. Specific occupational choices were not examined here. Rather, interest was directed at three generic options available to women with home-oriented careers. These were categorized as decisions for: 1) no change; 2) return to school; 3) return to paid employment.

General Objectives

The career behavior of mature, middle-income, married women was studied in order to expand existing knowledge and understanding of this relatively unstudied group. It was proposed that such information could be used to develop a prediction model which would facilitate more effective counseling, assist women in self-understanding, and guide institutions in the recruitment, selection, and utilization of eligibile women.

More specifically, there were two major objectives to the analyses of data generated by this research. The first dealt with the concept of vocational maturity which underlies the male-specific theories of career choice and development. Acknowledging the importance of this concept, the aim here was to gather information which might extend the usefulness of vocational maturity premises in clarifying the dynamic of women's career behavior. The second part of this investigation attempted to establish a prediction model for career choice of the women studied.

Methodology

Subjects

Subjects consisted of mature, middle-income, married women, who had participated in a career counseling program. [redacted] The program, Find your Way (FYW), was sponsored by Continuing Education for Women at the University of Connecticut, and given throughout the state.

Included in the study were married women, divorcees, and widows who

were not employed or in planned educational programs at the time of their participation in the counseling program. These women were requested to report what career changes, if any, they had made since completing the program two years earlier. In order to minimize research problems arising from variations in educational and employment opportunites due to time differentials, and to avoid the effects of changing economic conditions, federal legislation, and other intervening variables, only women who had completed the program in 1972 were studied.

The study described here examined career choices made by these women subsequent to their experience in FYW. An attempt was made to identify observable and measurable events in women's lives which might relate to various career choices. From responses to a self-report inventory, 107 women were classified into three discrete groups. In the first group, 46 women chose not to change and retained a home-oriented career; the second group included 30 who chose to return to school; and in the third group were 31 who chose to return to the labor market.

Instrumentation

The career choices of women surveyed were studied in relation to the following ten personal-social factors:

1. age
2. "life-stage" (detemined by age of youngest child)
3. years of school completed
4. educational degree level completed
5. length of time engaged in previous work experience
6. number of children
7. number of elapsed years since participation in formal educational activities
8. number of elapsed years since participation in the labor force

9. socio-economic rating of husband's occupation
10. level of vocational maturity.

To obtain a socio-economic rating for husband's occupation (factor 9), the Hamburger (n.d.) Revised Occupational Scale for Rating Socio-Economic Status was used. This is a multidimensional scale which Hamburger terms a class-status scale in that economic position and rewards as well as social prestige are considered the chief links between occupation and socio-economic status.

The instrument used for measuring vocational maturity (factor 10) was the Sheppard (1971) Adult Vocational Maturity Inventory. Subjects had been given this inventory while participating in the counseling program; the scores provided a measured level of vocational maturity for women in each of the groups. This instrument had been validated with male subjects and was selected here to determine its usefulness with women.

All other data were retrieved from biographical data forms which the women had completed while participating in the counseling program.

Data Analyses: Objective 1

Part one of the research, exploring the predictability of vocational maturity, used stepwise multiple regression procedures. Nine predictor variables were regressed against the criterion, AMVI scores, to examine the relationship of vocational maturity with the nine personal-social factors. The regressions were performed within each group (no change, educational change, employment change) separately as well as on the total sample of women.

Thus, four regression analyses were performed. Because no cross-validation groups were available, the original multiple correlations were corrected (shrunken) with a procedure outlined by McNemar (1962).

Data Analysis: Objective 2

In part two, stepwise multiple discriminant analysis procedures were used to determine the effectiveness of the ten personal-social factors in identifying the known group memberships of the women. Since the career choice (hence group membership) of each subject was known, the effectiveness of the factors as predictors could be reduced to a simple "hit-or-miss" calculation.

Results

Objective 1

The multiple regression analyses used in the first part of the research showed that the personal-social factors, when taken as a composite battery, were relatively ineffective predictors of vocational maturity. This was demonstrated for each of the four regression analyses, as none of the shrunken Rs were significant at the .05 level. Table 1 shows that even at the most effective prediction step in each analysis, only a small amount of the criterion variance (AMVI scores) was accounted for by the predictor variables. Especially interesting is the result which emerged when all subjects were pooled for the regression analysis. In this case, the prediction of vocational maturity was lowest of all. This finding suggests that predictability of vocational maturity depends to some extent upon group membership, and that when the groups are merged, group differences may be obscured. This hypothesis was partially confirmed in the results of Objective 2.

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Insert Table 1 about here

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Objective 2

The second part of the research used a stepwise multiple discriminant analysis. The results indicated that moderately accurate classification of group membership was possible for each of the discrete career groups.

Table 2 shows the "hit" rate for each of the groups. It can be seen that group 1 (no change) was the most accurately classified; group 2 (return to school) was rather poorly predicted. Overall, there was a 58 per cent accurate classification, about 25 percent beyond chance assignment to groups.

Insert Table 2 about here

Of the ten variables analyzed only seven were designated as statistically effective predictors of career choice. These, in order of their importance as predictors, were: 1) elapsed years since employed; 2) number of children; 3) age; 4) husband's occupational level; 5) vocational maturity scores; 6) educational degree level completed; 7) years of school completed.

Discussion

Since no important relationships emerged from the first analysis examining the predictability of vocational maturity, questions were raised regarding the effectiveness of the predictors, and regarding the validity of the AMVI when used with adult women. In other words, the research problem was compounded by an added unknown; the dependent as well as the independent variables suggested a need for further study. The limitations of accepted vocational development instruments as they apply to women has been discussed above. The present research, using an instrument validated only on male subjects further substantiates the need for re-examination of assessment instruments with limited validation before they are universally used for counseling.

The results of the second prediction procedure suggested that statistical differences do exist among the groups of women in respect to the events and experiences examined. However, the practical use of this prediction model is regarded as limited, in that a considerable margin of

prediction error could result from it. Any attempt to use this procedure for advising, directing, or selecting counselees could result in disastrous decisions, both for individuals and institutions. Therefore, this procedure was viewed as an exploratory beginning for defining characteristics of women with varying career behaviors.

The value of this research may be the demonstrated absence of importance of the obvious differences in the groups of women studied. It seems clear that stereotyped profiles of women, developed from the kind of data used here, are simply unreliable indicators for a career counseling process aimed at assisting mature women. Finally, the limited results gained from this study may help direct future research. If the concept of vocational maturity is retained as a viable component of development theories applicable to women, it would seem important to examine female career development in respect to developmental tasks and stages related to their commitments and experiences as wives and mothers. Also, any attempt to unravel the complex forces which impinge upon the career behavior of "transitional generation" women must surely consider such factors as attitudes, values, and other psychological dimensions which need to be investigated in respect to the development of women's self-concept and role-concept.

Postscript

In view of the limited and somewhat discouraging results of the studies described above, it was decided that the construct validity of the AMVI should be re-examined. According to the AMVI manual (Sheppard 1971), construct validity was earlier developed primarily by rational techniques. In particular, a confirmatory factor analysis (principal components solution) was performed on the data from the 107 subjects described earlier. The purpose was to confirm that the total score on the AMVI is an appropriate single dimension which taps overall vocational maturity. In other words, the principal components analysis was used to

establish support for a large, global dimension, which would in turn support the suggested scoring procedure for the AMVI.

A summary of the principal components analysis is shown in Table 3. The principal components solution generated not one dimension, but fifteen. Eleven of the components were interpretable, and the remaining four were single-item, "splinter" factors, which accounted for only a small portion of the canonical variation. Alpha internal consistency estimates were figured for the 11 multiple-item components; the range of these reliability estimates was from .26 to .74, with an average of .50. It seems apparent from these estimates that the reliability of the various components is tenuous at best.

Insert Table 3 about here

An additional weakness in the construct validity of the AMVI was discovered when the factor loadings were inspected. Theoretically, all AMVI items are scored such that a low score is supposed to represent "high" vocational maturity. Yet, the direction of the loadings are not consistent with this proposition. For example, component 4 (see Table 3) is composed of three positively loaded items, and two negatively loaded items. The most obvious implication of this finding is that certain of the items should be (but are not currently) reverse scored.

In summary, the principal components analysis pointed out the following weaknesses in the development of the AMVI:

1. the AMVI appears to measure a multidimensional domain, which is in direct contrast to the purported undimensionality of the instrument;
2. the internal consistency estimates of the components suggest

that the various dimensions are only weakly homogeneous; and

3. several of the items should probably be scored in an opposite direction from the format suggested in the manual.

These findings may help explain the weak results presented earlier in the paper. Another simple observation may be helpful for other researchers: examining the construct validity of an instrument should not be done after the fact, as was done in this research. Rather, construct validity should be carefully developed in advance of using an instrument as, say, a dependent measure in research studies. Attending to this maxim surely will slow down the proliferation of weak findings from weak instruments.

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Table 1

Summary of Stepwise Multiple Regressions Predicting

Vocational Maturity (AMVI) Scores

Regression analysis	N[1]	Number of Predictors at optimum step	Shrunken multiple R	P	Percent of variance accounted for
1. No change (from home-oriented careers)	44	2	.245	>.05	6.0
2. Educational Change (return to school)	30	2	.408	>.05	16.6
3. Employment Change (re-entry to labor market)	29	3	.317	>.05	10.0
4. Total Sample	103	2	.134	>.05	1.8

[1]Four cases were deleted because of missing data.

Table 2

Classification Outcomes from

Multiple Discriminant Analysis

Actual Membership[1]	Predicted Membership Group I	Group II	Group III	Percent correct hits	Percent better than chance
Group I (n=46)	34			73.91	40.58
Group II (n=30)		11		36.66	3.33
Group III (n=31)			17	54.84	21.51
Total		62		57.94	24.61

[1]Group I = no change; Group II = return to school; Group III = return to labor market.

Table 3

Summary of Principal Components Analysis of the AMVI

Tentative Component Names	Item Numbers[1,2]	Alpha Internal Consistency Reliability
1. Indifference	23,24,25,26,33	.74
2. Choice	1,10,12,15,21	.55
3. Rewards	31,32	.51
4. Planning	4,19,22,39,40	.54
5. Reality	27,28	.46
6. Control	2,3	.46
7. Dependence	6,13,14	.26
8. Decision-Making	5,18	.38
9. Goal-Orientation	4,11,12	.36
10. Uncertainty	9,29	.29
11. Information	16,38	.35
12-15. Single item "splinter" factors.		___

(Total canonical variation accounted for by the 15 components = 68 percent)

[1] Refers to original item numbers on the AMVI.

[2] Underlined items indicate opposite direction in component loadings; these items should be reverse scored.

ADULT VOCATIONAL MATURITY INVENTORY

David I. Sheppard, Ph.D.

Form II

Directions: Please read each of the following statements about choosing a job and decide the extent to which you agree or disagree. Draw a circle around the letter(s) to the right of each statement which most nearly represents your opinion. The letters represent the following opinions:

SA - if you strongly agree with the statement
A - if you agree, but not strongly
N - if you are neutral or undecided
D - if you disagree, but not strongly
SD - if you strongly disagree with the statement

Work rapidly and record your first impression. Remember, the only correct answer is the one which most nearly represents your attitude toward the vocational statement

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1.	You have to know what you are good at, and what you are poor at, before you can choose an occupation.	SA A N D SD
2.	Once a person makes an occupational choice he can't make another one.	SA A N D SD
3.	A person can do anything he wants as long as he tries hard.	SA A N D SD
4.	Your occupation is important because it determines how much you can earn.	SA A N D SD
5.	A consideration of what you are good at is more important than what you like in choosing an occupation.	SA A N D SD
6.	Parents probably know better than anybody which occupation a person should enter.	SA A N D SD
7.	Work is worthwhile mainly because it lets you buy things you want.	SA A N D SD
8.	Work is drudgery.	SA A N D SD
9.	Why should a person try to decide upon an occupation when the future is so uncertain.	SA A N D SD

10.	It's probably just as easy to be successful in one occupation as it is in another.	SA	A	N	D	SD
11.	By the time a person is 15, he should have his mind pretty well made up about the occupation he intends to enter.	SA	A	N	D	SD
12.	Sometimes you can't get into the occupation you want to enter.	SA	A	N	D	SD
13.	You can't go very far wrong by following your parent's advice about which occupation to enter.	SA	A	N	D	SD
14.	Working an occupation is much like going to school.	SA	A	N	D	SD
15.	The best thing to do is to try out several occupations, and then choose the one you like best.	SA	A	N	D	SD
16.	There is only one occupation for each individual.	SA	A	N	D	SD
17.	Whether you are interested in an occupation is not as important as whether you can do the work.	SA	A	N	D	SD
18.	You get into an occupation mostly by chance.	SA	A	N	D	SD
19.	It's who you know, not what you know, that's important in an occupation.	SA	A	N	D	SD
20.	A person should choose an occupation in which he can someday become famous.	SA	A	N	D	SD
21.	If someone has some doubts about what he wants to do, he should ask his parents or friends for advice and suggestions.	SA	A	N	D	SD
22.	Choose an occupation which allows you to do what you believe in.	SA	A	N	D	SD
23.	It doesn't matter which occupation a person chooses as long as it pays well.	SA	A	N	D	SD
24.	As far as choosing an occupation is concerned, something always comes along sooner or later.	SA	A	N	D	SD
25.	Why worry about choosing an occupation when a person doesn't have anything to say about it anyway.	SA	A	N	D	SD
26.	I really can't find any occupation that has much appeal to me.	SA	A	N	D	SD

27.	I had little or no idea of what working would be like.	SA A N D SD
28.	As long as I can remember I've known what I wanted to do.	SA A N D SD
29.	I can't understand how some people could be so set about what they wanted to do.	SA A N D SD
30.	My ideal occupation would have to be one which has short hours and nice working conditions.	SA A N D SD
31.	I wanted an occupation which payed good money.	SA A N D SD
32.	I often wondered how successful I would be in my occupation.	SA A N D SD.
33.	I know very little about the requirements of occupations.	SA A N D SD
34.	I spend a lot of time wishing I could do work that I know I cannot ever possibly do.	SA A N D SD
35.	I guess everybody goes to work sooner or later, but I didn't look forward to it.	SA A N D SD
36.	I often daydreamed about what I wanted to be, but I really didn't have an occupational choice.	SA A N D SD
37.	The greatest appeal of an occupation to me is the opportunity it provides for getting ahead.	SA A N D SD
38.	Everyone told me something different, until I didn't know which occupation to choose.	SA A N D SD
39.	I seldom thought about the occupation I wanted to enter.	SA A N D SD
40.	I didn't think much about the kind of job I wanted.	SA A N D SD